

High school graduation requirements

One of the National Education Goals states that students leaving grade 12 will have demonstrated competency in English, mathematics, science, and social studies (history and geography). The extent to which public school districts and private schools include substantial coursework in these core subjects is an indication of the level of support educators are giving this goal. The 1983 recommendations by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE)—4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies—provide a useful standard for comparing course requirements.

- Between the 1987–88 and 1993–94 school years, the percentage of public school districts that had high school graduation requirements meeting or exceeding NCEE recommendations for the four core subject areas increased from 12 to 20 percent.
- Public school districts in most states and private schools were more likely to meet or exceed the NCEE recommendation for English than for mathematics or science (see supplemental table 26-1).
- Private schools were more likely to have graduation requirements that met or exceeded the NCEE recommendations for the four core subjects than public school districts. For example, in the 1993–94 school year, 45 percent of private schools had graduation requirements that met or exceeded NCEE recommendations for the four core subjects, compared to 20 percent of public school districts.
- During the 1993–94 school year, public school districts with a high minority enrollment (50 percent or more) were more likely to have graduation requirements that met or exceeded the NCEE recommendations for the four core subjects than districts with a low minority enrollment (less than 5 percent) (see supplemental table 26-2).

Average years of study public school districts and private schools required in core subjects¹ for high school graduation, and percentage of public school districts and private schools with graduation requirements at or above NCEE recommendations,² by subject: School years 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94

School year	English		Mathematics		Science		Core subjects	
	Average years required	Percentage requiring 4 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations ³
Public school districts								
1987–88	3.8	80.0	2.4	34.6	2.0	17.2	11.0	12.3
1990–91	3.8	⁴ 82.5	⁴ 2.4	⁴ 40.3	2.1	⁴ 21.5	11.2	⁴ 15.2
1993–94	3.9	85.2	2.5	44.8	2.2	25.2	11.5	19.8
Private schools								
1987–88	3.9	93.8	2.9	67.4	2.5	43.5	12.5	38.6
1990–91	3.9	93.2	2.8	71.1	2.5	49.0	12.3	43.9
1993–94	4.0	98.9	2.9	74.8	2.5	49.0	12.7	44.8

¹ Core subjects include English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Data for social studies are included in the totals but are not shown separately.

² The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that students complete 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies.

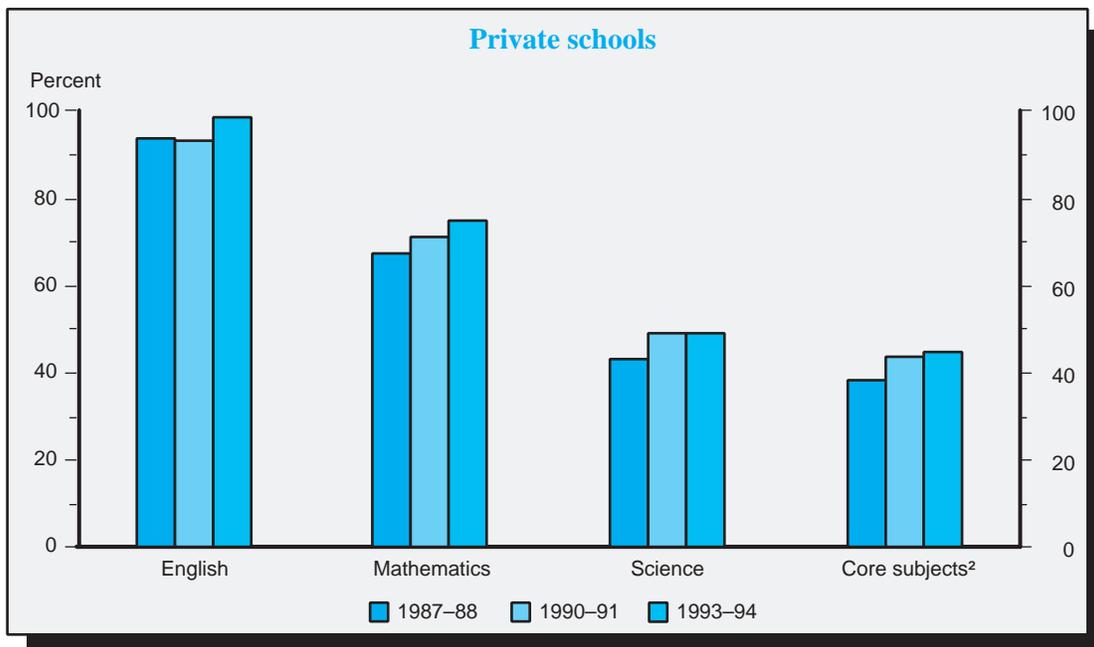
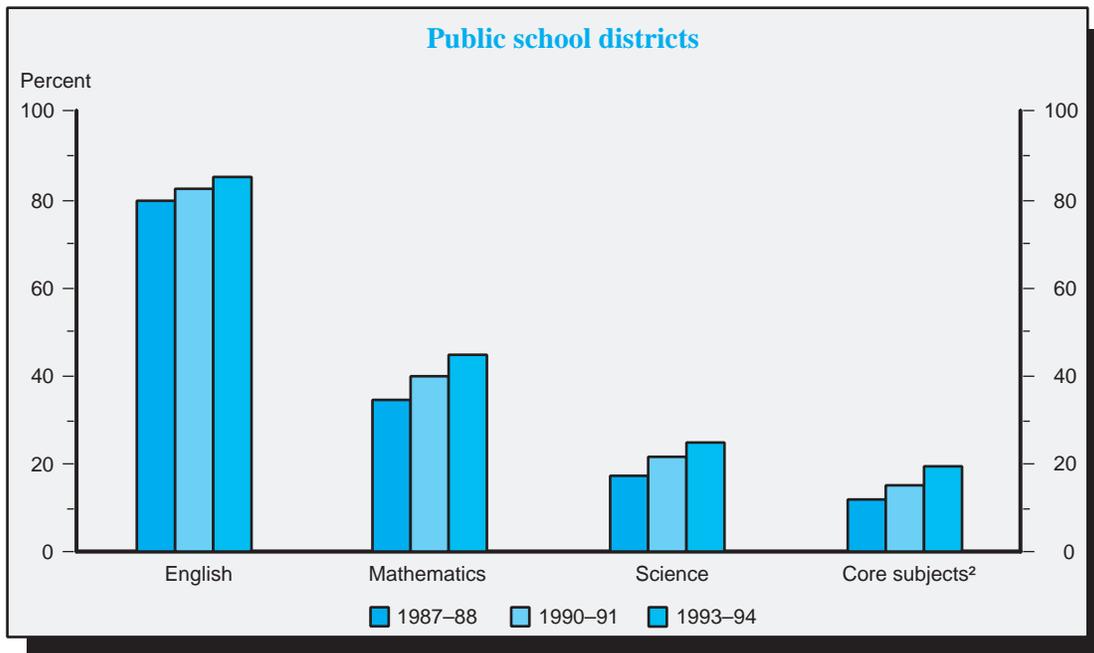
³ "Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations" refers to a combination of the required years students must take the four core subjects: 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies, which adds to a total of 13 years.

⁴ Revised from previously published figures.

NOTE: Public school districts with curriculum requirements for 3-year programs were excluded from this analysis (1 percent of all districts).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire and Private School Questionnaire), 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94.

**Percentage of public school districts and private schools with graduation requirements at or above NCEE recommendations,¹ by subject:
School years 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94**



¹ The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that students complete 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies.

² Core subjects include English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Data for social studies are not shown separately.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire and Private School Questionnaire), 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94.

Table 26-1 Average years of study public school districts required in core subjects¹ for high school graduation and percentage of public school districts with graduation requirements at or above NCEE recommendations,² by subject and state: School year 1993–94

State	English		Mathematics		Science		Core subjects	
	Average years required	Percentage requiring 4 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations ³
United States	3.9	85.2	2.5	44.8	2.2	25.2	11.5	19.8
Alabama	4.0	100.0	2.5	37.6	2.3	28.2	12.0	26.0
Alaska	4.0	100.0	2.6	57.4	2.3	30.8	12.0	28.7
Arizona	4.0	100.0	2.3	22.0	2.0	11.7	11.3	8.9
Arkansas	4.0	99.4	2.9	86.3	2.6	60.4	12.3	43.2
California	3.7	68.4	2.3	24.8	2.1	8.4	11.4	5.0
Colorado	3.8	78.5	2.5	44.2	2.3	27.0	11.5	24.9
Connecticut	4.0	100.0	3.0	92.7	2.2	23.1	12.1	22.1
Delaware	4.0	100.0	2.4	41.2	2.0	11.8	11.6	11.8
District of Columbia	4.0	100.0	2.0	0.0	3.5	100.0	11.5	0.0
Florida	4.0	100.0	3.0	98.5	3.0	94.1	13.1	90.4
Georgia	4.0	96.6	2.6	56.9	2.5	49.4	12.1	39.4
Hawaii	4.0	100.0	3.0	100.0	3.0	100.0	14.0	100.0
Idaho	4.0	98.0	2.4	28.9	2.3	21.2	11.6	18.3
Illinois	3.4	31.2	2.2	17.5	1.9	16.0	9.7	6.8
Indiana	4.0	98.2	2.2	18.0	2.1	8.8	10.7	6.0
Iowa	3.6	46.1	2.3	26.4	2.2	23.2	11.1	11.5
Kansas	4.0	99.6	2.3	29.2	2.2	18.1	11.5	14.9
Kentucky	4.0	100.0	2.9	91.2	2.2	26.3	11.5	14.3
Louisiana	4.0	100.0	3.0	100.0	3.0	96.6	13.0	94.7
Maine	4.0	100.0	2.5	44.1	2.2	19.6	11.1	17.3
Maryland	4.0	100.0	3.0	100.0	2.4	35.7	12.5	35.7
Massachusetts	3.9	95.3	2.5	47.3	2.2	28.8	11.2	26.8
Michigan	3.5	51.2	2.2	17.6	2.0	11.8	10.6	4.5
Minnesota	4.0	100.0	2.3	32.3	2.1	20.0	11.8	17.1
Mississippi	4.0	99.3	2.5	42.9	2.4	32.2	11.7	27.5
Missouri	3.2	20.9	2.2	19.8	2.1	13.7	10.3	5.0
Montana	4.0	100.0	2.2	17.6	2.1	13.2	10.9	7.8
Nebraska	3.9	90.9	2.5	42.5	2.2	23.0	11.8	17.1
Nevada	4.0	100.0	2.3	29.4	2.1	11.8	10.8	0.0
New Hampshire	4.0	97.8	2.2	17.0	2.1	4.6	10.8	2.8
New Jersey	4.0	99.2	3.0	96.3	2.2	18.0	12.1	18.0
New Mexico	4.0	100.0	2.9	92.8	2.1	17.0	12.0	13.4
New York	4.0	100.0	2.1	8.4	2.0	6.8	12.0	5.1
North Carolina	3.9	97.1	2.7	63.1	2.5	51.3	11.8	45.0
North Dakota	4.0	97.0	2.4	40.7	2.3	27.7	11.7	23.0

Table 26-1 Average years of study public school districts required in core subjects¹ for high school graduation and percentage of public school districts with graduation requirements at or above NCEE recommendations,² by subject and state: School year 1993–94—Continued

State	English		Mathematics		Science		Core subjects	
	Average years required	Percentage requiring 4 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations ³
Ohio	3.7	71.4	2.2	18.8	1.6	9.8	10.2	4.5
Oklahoma	4.0	100.0	2.4	35.3	2.3	26.8	11.3	15.5
Oregon	3.9	92.8	2.1	7.6	2.0	3.6	11.2	6.3
Pennsylvania	4.0	98.6	3.2	98.1	3.0	90.8	13.7	90.1
Rhode Island	4.0	100.0	2.3	25.2	2.2	13.0	10.7	6.9
South Carolina	4.0	100.0	3.0	97.8	2.1	17.6	12.0	14.0
South Dakota	4.0	100.0	2.4	35.4	2.3	29.7	11.7	19.3
Tennessee	4.0	98.8	2.4	40.6	2.2	21.6	10.7	9.8
Texas	4.0	99.5	3.0	97.2	2.3	29.4	12.3	25.1
Utah	3.7	69.8	2.4	40.6	2.3	29.7	10.9	6.3
Vermont	4.0	100.0	3.0	79.1	2.4	53.0	12.3	51.4
Virginia	4.0	100.0	2.5	45.2	2.3	31.1	11.8	30.0
Washington	3.8	74.2	2.2	22.2	2.1	11.7	11.3	8.4
West Virginia	3.9	98.1	2.4	35.9	2.1	11.5	11.5	9.6
Wisconsin	4.0	96.4	2.2	17.3	2.1	11.4	11.3	6.8
Wyoming	3.8	81.7	2.5	45.1	2.3	35.6	11.5	24.2

¹ Core subjects include English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Data for social studies are included in the totals but are not shown separately.

² The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that students complete 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies.

³ "Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations" refers to a combination of the required years students must take the four core subjects: 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies, which adds to a total of 13 years.

NOTE: Public school districts with curriculum requirements for 3-year programs were excluded from this analysis (1 percent of all districts).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire), 1993–94.

Table 26-2 Average years of study public school districts required in core subjects¹ for high school graduation and percentage of public school districts with graduation requirements at or above NCEE recommendations,² by subject and selected district characteristics: School years 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94

District characteristics	English		Mathematics		Science		Core subjects	
	Average years required	Percentage requiring 4 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations ³
School year 1993–94								
Total	3.9	85.2	2.5	44.8	2.2	25.2	11.5	19.8
Metropolitan status								
Urban area	3.9	88.0	2.5	50.0	2.1	20.7	11.4	18.2
Outside urban area	3.8	84.1	2.5	44.1	2.2	23.6	11.5	20.0
Rural area	3.9	85.7	2.5	44.9	2.2	26.6	11.5	19.8
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch								
0–5	3.9	86.9	2.5	46.1	2.1	22.8	11.3	17.7
6–20	3.8	79.0	2.4	35.0	2.1	20.6	11.3	15.4
21–40	3.9	85.5	2.4	40.7	2.2	23.7	11.5	18.6
41 or more	3.9	88.2	2.6	53.3	2.3	29.0	11.7	23.4
Percentage of minority students enrolled								
Less than 5	3.8	79.8	2.4	36.0	2.2	24.7	11.3	17.8
5–19	3.9	87.1	2.5	43.4	2.2	22.8	11.5	18.3
20–49	3.9	91.6	2.6	56.9	2.2	26.8	11.7	22.8
50 or more	3.9	92.5	2.7	64.2	2.3	30.2	12.0	26.7
School year 1990–91								
Total	3.8	482.5	42.4	440.3	2.1	421.5	11.2	415.2
Metropolitan status								
Urban area	3.8	83.2	2.5	50.2	2.1	22.7	11.3	18.5
Outside urban area	3.8	82.2	2.4	39.9	2.1	20.8	11.3	15.8
Rural area	3.8	82.6	2.4	39.8	2.1	21.9	11.2	14.5
Percentage of minority students enrolled								
Less than 5	3.7	71.9	2.3	30.2	2.1	18.8	11.0	9.6
5–19	3.8	78.9	2.4	36.4	2.1	21.0	11.2	13.2
20–49	3.8	83.8	2.4	35.7	2.1	22.2	11.2	17.3
50 or more	3.8	87.6	2.5	46.8	2.1	22.6	11.3	17.5
School year 1987–88								
Total	3.8	80.0	2.4	34.6	2.0	17.2	11.0	12.3
Percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch								
0–5	3.8	83.0	2.3	30.8	2.0	16.8	11.0	14.0
6–20	3.7	76.1	2.3	29.2	2.0	15.2	10.8	10.7
21–40	3.8	78.6	2.3	33.8	2.0	16.1	11.0	12.0
41 or more	3.9	87.0	2.5	46.5	2.1	22.2	11.3	14.8
Percentage of minority students enrolled								
Less than 5	3.7	75.4	2.3	27.7	2.0	15.8	10.8	11.3
5–19	3.8	82.3	2.4	34.6	2.0	16.3	10.9	12.0
20–49	3.9	87.2	2.6	50.6	2.1	20.8	11.4	14.2
50 or more	3.9	89.5	2.6	48.8	2.1	21.8	11.4	15.9

¹ Core subjects include English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Data for social studies are included in the totals but are not shown separately.

² The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommends that students complete 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies.

³ "Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations" refers to a combination of the required years students must take the four core subjects: 4 years of English, 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies, which adds to a total of 13 years.

⁴ Revised from previously published figures.

NOTE: Data for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were not available at the district level for school year 1990–91. Data for metropolitan status were not available at the district level for school year 1987–88. Public school districts with curriculum requirements for 3-year programs were excluded from this analysis (1 percent of all districts).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire), 1987–88, 1990–91, and 1993–94.

Standard Error Tables

Table S26 Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 26*

School year	English		Mathematics		Science		Core subjects	
	Average years required	Percentage requiring 4 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage requiring 3 or more years	Average years required	Percentage meeting NCEE recommendations
Public school districts								
1987-88	*0.0	0.7	*0.0	0.8	*0.0	0.7	*0.0	0.6
1990-91	*0.0	0.6	*0.0	0.8	*0.0	0.7	*0.0	0.7
1993-94	*0.0	0.8	*0.0	0.7	*0.0	0.6	*0.0	0.6
Private schools								
1987-88	*0.0	1.5	*0.0	2.2	0.1	2.8	0.1	2.8
1990-91	0.1	1.4	*0.0	1.6	*0.0	2.3	0.2	2.1
1993-94	*0.0	0.3	*0.0	2.2	*0.0	2.5	0.1	2.5

* Standard errors less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire and Private School Questionnaire), 1987-88, 1990-91, and 1993-94.